

Pillai
Biog
H. A. KRISHNA PILLAI

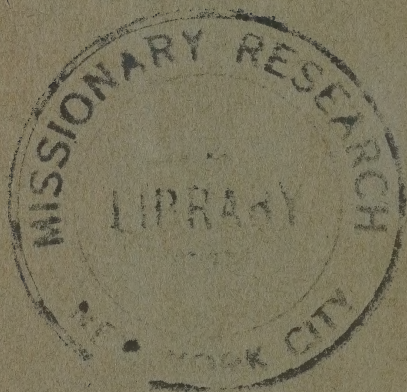
AMY CARMICHAEL

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY FOR INDIA
MADRAS ALLAHABAD RANGOON COLOMBO

1927

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BY
AMY CARMICHAEL

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INTRODUCTION

TIME judges men. One hundred years after the birth of H. A. Krishna Pillai—he was born in the village of Karairuppu, Tinnevely District, on April 23, 1827—we are thinking of him more than ever. Out of the records of the past as well as from the living memories of those who knew him, we are seeking to understand him. He exerted a fine influence on those who were brought into touch with him; it is as well that that influence should now begin to increase.

In a short pamphlet like this there is very little to add to the vivid and intimate picture which Miss Carmichael has given of Krishna Pillai in her *Overweights of Joy*. Except for the stormy period described so well by her, the poet's life seems to have been one of a quiet tenor. The greater part of his life was spent in work as a Tamil Pandit at different institutions: the Presidency College, Madras, S. P. G. High School, Sawyerpuram, C. M. S. College, Tinnevely, and the Maharajah's College, Trivandrum. He was a loving teacher and took every opportunity of influencing those who came in contact with him to become disciples of Christ. The great affection he had for his pupils induced many of them to listen respectfully to his teaching about Christ. Persuasive teaching, continued prayerfully for years, brought its results and several young men accepted Christ as their Lord and Master. In these men and in their descendants Krishna Pillai still lives.

It is even more in his own books that his Christ-like character is best treasured. He devoted the last seven years of his life wholly to literary work. Literature is supposed by some to be dead. But dead words quicken men into new life. Krishna Pillai, though no longer living, teaches to an ever-increasing circle of readers his utter loyalty to the Lord. He was brought up from early youth in an atmosphere of Tamil learning. He loved Tamil Literature and formed the idea of writing a long Christian poem. He desired that this poem, in its form as well as in its content, should take its place among the great classics of Tamil Literature. This ambition he lived to see realized. After a toil of fourteen years his *Ratchanya Yatrikam* was published in 1894, just six years before his death at the ripe age of seventy-three. It renders in immortal Tamil verse the story of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is not a translation of the great English book but an adaptation. To those who have the key of understanding classical Tamil, the *Yatrikam* is a masterpiece of rich imagery, passionate devotion and fine music. His hymns of praise and adoration were gathered together into a smaller and more convenient form as *Rakshanya Manoharam*. Both these books were published by the Christian Literature Society, Madras.

This little pamphlet may enable some to get a glimpse of his rare gifts as poet and saint and lead them to follow the Lord humbly and closely as he did.

A. J. APPASAMY

H. A. KRISHNA PILLAI

I

‘Your Christian poet! he was my father’s friend! a great scholar. We know his poetry.’

As the voice spoke I saw the man it named: a tall gaunt figure in white; white-turbaned head; eyes which observed; face, olive in colouring, seamed and lined all over, furrowed deep across the forehead; character in every movement of the long slender hands; strong affection in the glance of the dark piercing eyes.

I saw him as he first photographed himself upon me. It was the last day of my final examination in Tamil. The old scholar was one of the examiners. He came early, seated himself comfortably, and put on his spectacles. We were alone for a while; beyond the salaam of greeting neither of us spoke: the victim on such occasions is not talkative. But the old man looked at me, and his keen eyes filled with sympathy. ‘Why this fear?’ he said, pointing up, ‘GOD IS.’

Some words and some gestures live. That hand pointing upward, that voice saying ‘GOD IS,’ are as if hours, not years, had passed since then. The overwhelming nervousness

which had made the impending *viva voce* almost a physical impossibility passed in part at least. Oh, the faithlessness, the cowardice of fear, when God, the Doer, as the name he used suggested, IS.

And again I saw him. He was dying; unconscious, it was thought. I had taken a card with 'Jesus' written large in Tamil. 'He will not know you; he cannot read now,' said the watchers sadly. But he opened his eyes, and saw the word, and it was as if a great light passed over his face. Never shall I forget that light and the smile that looked out of those loving old eyes as they lingered over the word. Then we saw he was trying to lift his hand. Some one helped him, and the finger traced it as if writing it, character by character. No one spoke. He could not speak, but the trembling finger still traced the word over and over. Then the lips moved, and the dark eyes, dim with death's dimness, shone. We knew he was speaking to Jesus. Then with a satisfied, rested look, like the look of a little tired child that finds itself in its mother's arms, and is so glad just to go to sleep, the old man turned, and fell asleep, his hand still touching caressingly the dear word 'JESUS.'

One day when I was wishing I knew something more of one who had impressed me more than any Indian I had then met,

Mr. Walker gave me a manuscript to read. It seems to me worth giving you. You will understand that it loses in translation. But the heart in sympathy will feel the heart-beat through it, coldly though it must read, and heavily, in comparison with the warmth and lightness of the Indian original.

The manuscript is headed, 'How I became a Christian: written in 1893.' Then the text, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,' or as the Tamil has it, 'with meekness and reverence.' With meekness and reverence, then, he begins: 'If asked to state what was the cause of my breaking off with Hinduism to become a Christian, what cause can I assign except only the tender compassion of Heavenly grace? At the same time I am ready to narrate the subsidiary means for so great a change, which that Heavenly grace employed from time to time, and to write in order the events which proved conducive to my conversion.'

A few strenuous words as to Hinduism preface this introduction. He writes as an Indian poet does, wrapping thoughts in tight bundles, which once unfastened refuse to be packed up again in as small compass. So that we cannot do justice to its compressed intensity. English sounds diffuse after such Tamil.

As a Hindu of the stricter type, his life, he says, was sin: sin which did not recognize its sinfulness. Uttermost darkness was around him and within him. Then came the tenderness of God's compassion, the grace which cares. As a hand it drew him, lifted him out of the abyss, set him in the Way, made him, once a Hindu and an alien, meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Again and again in language which seems to be searching for words warm enough and bright enough to radiate forth the joy that is in him, he piles verse upon verse in praise of the Father who delivered him from the power of darkness, and translated him into the Kingdom of His dear Son.

'I was a Hindu of the strict Vaishnavite sect. I had only one brother, younger than myself. My father possessed in an eminent degree the excellent characteristics of benevolence, compassion, merciful pity, and kindness to animals. With the exception of a few defects he was consistently a zealous votary of the Vaishnavite creed. He possessed great ability in understanding the meaning of the Tamil classics, and in expounding them to others. The study of these formed his mental pastime. He was neither very rich nor very poor; and he was held in high esteem by the scholars, Government officials, and magnates

of his day. At the age of forty-seven the relinquishment of his body befell him, but before this he had sought out and married to me, then aged thirteen and a half, a small girl-child. Moreover, he had divided the family property so that there should be no room for trouble or disputes on the part of our relatives. This arrangement proved most serviceable to us boys, in the matter of our education. While my father still lived he had taught me the *Ramayana*, and my mother, who was a keen-minded woman, used to tell us the poem's story, and explain the meaning of the stanzas.

'It was during my father's life-time that I was initiated. This Initiation includes the Sealing, or Branding, which means the branding of both shoulders of the votary by a golden discus, heated red-hot in the sacrificial fire, in token that he is a devotee, slave of Vishnu, that he will never henceforth break his fast without having first performed the prescribed daily ceremonies, and that he will faithfully observe such and such rites. I was only a small boy at the time, so two strong men gripped me firmly from behind, and held me tight. The heat and pain were intolerable: my eyes filled with tears. But it would have been disgrace and the height of misdemeanour at such a moment to cry aloud. My father had some others branded with me, as a

meritorious act of charity; the cost was one hundred rupees. I was the only one in our family on whom the rite was performed. It is now nearly fifty-two years since these brand marks were stamped on me, but they are still only too clearly visible. I was then taught by our Guru to repeat the chief and fundamental mantra which, being interpreted, means "All adoration to Vishnu, the mystic Om."

'When I was eighteen years of age I was a bitter foe, not of Christianity as such, but of those who, according to the fashion of that period, wrote down their names as Christians, while they disgraced the glorious name of Christ. . . .

'From my eighteenth year, my brother and myself studied carefully, by our own exertions, the Tamil classics. Not only so, but since printed copies of Tamil grammatical works were then unprocurable, we borrowed, from a respected senior, palm-leaf copies of the standard grammar (written in poetical form) and wrote out new copies for ourselves on palmyra leaves. At that time there were only two or three scholars in the whole district who were really versed in Tamil. One of these was a friend of my father. We took advantage of the fact, attached ourselves to him, and exerted ourselves to study. For a year and a half we rendered him the service of disciples, and so

pursued our studies. Still later we worked with earnest ardour, and thus completed our grammatical studies. If I had not given myself thus to grammatical study, how should I ever have become a Tamil Pandit? Had I not become a Tamil Pandit, how should I ever have become closely acquainted with Christian truth? It is clear to me, therefore, that it was the doing of the Holy Mind, and that alone, which attracted me from early youth to Tamil studies.'

Thus far the education of one who was to become pre-eminently the Christian Tamil scholar of South India. This simple account tells of a cultured home, where the study of the classics was the pastime of the father, and the telling of beautiful old-world tales to her little sons, the mother's pleasure. Such pastime and such pleasure imply a knowledge of the ancient language in which all poetry is written, and this in itself, as any scholar versed in it will acknowledge, is the study of a lifetime.

Both brothers became Pandits, Professors of Tamil, in missionary colleges, and thus came for the first time with vital Christianity.

The story continues:

'Before I undertook this work, I knew nothing really of Christianity. True, when I was about ten years old, a tract called *The Incarnation of Grace* fell into my hands. In it

Vishnu's ten incarnations were described in order, and the abominations in each were dilated upon. But this was the only impression left on my mind. The closing part of it, describing the holy attributes and deeds of Him who is the Form of Salvation, had no effect on me at all.

When I began my Pandit work the missionary to whom I gave lessons in the language treated me with considerable kindness, and used to speak to me about the Christian Way. Though his words upon this subject were as gall and wormwood to my Hindu soul, yet by degrees his excellent character and deeds won upon me, and induced me to listen to what he said without gainsaying. A little later I borrowed a copy of the Tamil Scriptures, and began to read it. I read as far as the twentieth chapter of the Exodus, in order, from the beginning. From what I thus read I got it firmly fixed in my mind, that the creation of the world, the advent of sin, the Deluge, and other following incidents, are faithfully and truly narrated in the Bible, and that all the stories which occur in the Vaishnavite books about these subjects are inventions, baseless myths, and garnished pleasantries. Thus the daily ceremonies which I, as a Vaishnavite, scrupulously observed, my fastings, attendances at the religious festivals with which

each month ends, and caste, etiquette and distinctions, pall'd upon my taste. . . . 'It was at this juncture that my mind became deeply impressed with the consciousness that I should have to face the responsibility of my sins, and that the paltry subterfuges and atonements which are found in Hinduism were useless and vain. But what of this? Does not the poet remind us how the foolish cock, through sheer force of habit, continues its idiotic scratching on the rock, as if grains of rice were there? And so it was with me. The old inclinations refused to leave my mind (such as the inclination still to reach in Hinduism for what was not there); and the sinful habits in which I had so long indulged continued in unabated force. I therefore came to the conclusion that since association with Christians and the reading of their Book disturbed my mind, my best course was to cut clear of both; and accordingly I desisted entirely from such conversation and reading. If any Christian accosted me, I gave no room for conversation. Only when the missionary spoke did I go through the form of listening; but it was with a deaf ear. Some time so passed. Hard was my heart and dead.'

With a few graphic words he closes this part of his story, telling in terse Tamil poetry how he 'beat, bruised, and slew, slew, ay and

buried,' the living voice within him, which slain, still lived and spoke of Him who as yet had no form or comeliness to him, no beauty that he should desire Him.

II

About this time his 'Hindu soul' was stirred to its depths, and lashed into wrath, by the conversion of several of his friends. The first one to cross the line, and break for ever with life as it had been, was a fellow-Pandit, who as a fellow-student in old days had been 'a fast heart-friend.' This was grief unspeakable. And worse followed; for shortly afterwards his own younger brother, together with two other friends, confessed themselves Christians and were baptized.

'It would be impossible to describe all that followed this,' he writes: 'the tumults which arose; the insults which the missionaries had to endure; the anguish which filled the hearts of the parents and relations of the newly baptized. No English mind can grasp the extent of the grief which my mother and I experienced on account of my brother's conversion. However much I might say or write about it, it would still remain utterly beyond the ken of foreigners, and might only seem to them grotesque, extraordinary. I do not charge them with want of sympathy. I only say that it lies beyond the bounds of their experience.'

‘One of the two who had just been baptized had been for years my bosom friend. Though he was younger than myself my mind rejoiced to regard his word as the word of a very guru, because of the ripeness of his knowledge, keenness of intellect, and nobility of character and life.’ All that was over now. In that hour of shock it seemed as if the friend dishonoured and defiled could be a friend no longer. The pain was poignant.

Between the brothers there was the same misery of estrangement. They had been united in a closeness of intimacy rare in the West: now seas divided them. And the mother, devoted as the Indian mother is with a devotion the more intense because the less diffused, had to see the son who was ever as the nursling to her heart, pass into another world with which hers held no communion. Night after night she wailed the death wail for him. To her love, to her care, he was dead.

And then while the wound was still too new to bear even the tenderest touch, the missionary touched it, by mistake. ‘Your brother has become a Christian, has he not? What is there now to hinder you?’ This was to the Pandit. What was there to hinder? Only his mother’s completed desolation, his young wife’s woe. Was not the home stricken hard enough already? Stung to the quick the Pandit

answered haughtily, left the room indignantly, and immediately sent in his resignation. The missionary recognized his mistake, would not accept the resignation, tried to explain where he could not console. But though he persuaded his Pandit to stay, and strove to show him he truly cared, he could not undo the effect of those words, and one can understand how the two must have drifted apart.

It all happened years ago. Pandit and pupil have long been together in the land where forgiveness means forgetting. But the incident speaks to us of to-day. There are times when we can best help a soul through silence, not speech.

After a time the young Pandit and his special friend drew together, in spite of their divergence of views, and the friend understanding him could help him. He lent him *The Pilgrim's Progress* to read; the book became alluring to him, took hold of him, became at once his possession and possessor. In after years he translated or adapted it so finely in Tamil verse, that it has become the greatest of our Christian classics, judged from a higher Tamil point of view. 'I have poured my life into that book,' he said once. 'My heart's deepest is in it.' But that was later. 'My friend impressed it strongly upon me,' the story continues, 'that it was absolutely

essential for me to forsake all known sin, otherwise it would be useless for me to read religious books, or indeed anything else. I acted upon his advice. I endeavoured to put away everything which I knew to be wrong in my life. Some glaring sins, my conscience being witness, I entirely forsook. Nevertheless, though an outward reformation took place to some extent, there was no inward cleansing from sin, neither was my mind constant and steadfast.

‘When I met my friend later he told me to read the Gospel history in order, and to ask God to open my spirit-eyes. He taught me, too, how I should pray, and I set to work to follow his instructions. But though I came in this way to understand clearly the doctrines of the Saviour’s holy incarnation, I was all in a haze of confusion as to how His atonement could bring salvation to man.’

I have hesitated about copying out the next paragraph; the wonderful way of salvation is so familiar to the reader. But it may be, one will read this page whose feet have not yet trodden that path, and perhaps the old scholar’s description of what was to him such unfamiliar ground may be like a light from the East, falling upon it, making the steps show clearer.

‘One day, when that soul-friend and I were alone together, I told him all about my doubts

and bewilderment, and asked him questions on the subject. He therefore explained to me how the Lord Christ, the Son of God, had become the Mediator between the holy God and sinful men, who had broken God's law, and were in sin's dark prison. He showed me how He, the Christ, had become Surety for men, and was incarnate as the Reconciler (the One who makes smooth the unevenness between justice and mercy); how He had kept the law for men, being pure in mind, word, deed; that is, pure in His whole nature. For we Hindus regard the essentials of being as three-fold: there is the mind, source of thought; the tongue, which forms words, expression of thought; the body, producing action, thought made visible. Viewed from all points He was pure. My friend further showed me how the Lord had wrought out spotless righteousness, and had taken upon Himself all the sins of all mankind, with all the punishment due to them; and how He had endured untold agony of soul and body on the cross, shedding His blood, and yielding up His life as a sacrifice for sin, and so providing for us most perfect merit. He went on to describe how He had risen victorious from the dead, and so finally procured eternal life for countless souls; and how He had ascended to Heaven, and taken up His glorious session on the right hand of the

Father, there to intercede and bestow salvation on all believers. He explained, moreover, that since Christ was universal Lord, the salvation which He had purchased was available for all mankind; and that whosoever sincerely, with real contrition and repentance, believes that Christ alone is the Sin-destroyer, the World-Saviour, and that He bore and put away his punishment—is justified; and to him is imparted Christ's perfect merit. "This is salvation," said my friend. "The one so saved is a liberated soul."

Then followed the new-old miracle. 'The Spirit of God sent home this truth to my heart then and there. That very day I knew the Lord Christ. That very day I learned to pray to His name. That very day the sins which had seemed sweet to me before became bitterness itself. That very day I resolved to become a Christian.'

And that very day he who was to be known wherever the Tamil tongue is known as the Christian poet, sang his first song to the glory of the 'Glorious Sea of Grace, bright Sun of Love, whose radiance makes the darkness flee.' Thought on thought and word on word came running up, eager to tell what cannot be told of the light like the light of the morning when the sun rises, of the fairness like the fairness of the green tender grass springing out

of the earth by clear shining after rain, of the skyful of stars which all were suns that had suddenly opened above him. And he longed for power to express to his people the beauty and dearness of Christ Jesus his Redeemer, by whose stripes he was healed.

III

‘How shall I tell what happened?’ he writes, looking back on that illuminated day. ‘God opened my heart, and I opened my lips to praise Him for His love.’ Simply told, is it not? ‘God opened my heart: I opened my lips.’ Life henceforth was to be for him full of that opening of the lips which fills other lips with song.

But not quite yet. ‘Now, though none of my family knew of my change, they began to grow suspicious about me, because I discontinued my former religious observances; and they asked questions about it. I put them off with evasive answers. I used to pray on my mat, after all had retired. Sometimes my wife would come unexpectedly, and ask me some question, and my silence increased her suspicions. I soon got tired of concealments and calling her alone one day, I said a few words gently about Christianity. She at once began to cry and make a great noise, threatening to take her life.

‘When I came to the decision to become a Christian we had three little daughters under five years of age. My chief anxiety was lest, by becoming an open Christian, I should plunge my family in great grief and confusion;

and though my decision was not weakened by this, I had not the boldness to shake myself free from my fear, and take the open step. And so it came to pass that I spent some time like a man fast bound in prison.'

This will seem incredible to some. Had he not known the Lord Christ? To others it will seem only natural, indeed right. His mother had been already sorely stricken by her other son's defection; how could he raise his hand to strike her again? His wife trusted him; how could he wrong her trust? His relations, though not dependent upon him, were connected by closest ties of affection; uncles and aunts who had known him from childhood, cousins innumerable. In England families subdivide: in India they hold together. How could he, as he said, plunge all these people, who loved him, and whom he loved, into 'great grief and confusion.' He could not wreck the home: all that was good in him rose and protested. So he did certain compromising things, and instead of the sword, there was peace.

Then came the inevitable agony. Would God it need not be! To smooth it over a friend suggested that if he went to Madras, then farther from his home than India is from England as regards journey-time, it would be easier to confess Christ openly, and to persuade his wife to join him. Easier in every way,

because the family would be among strangers, and not their own caste people. And so it was arranged. He left his wife and children with his mother, went to Madras, got work as Pandit, and wrote for his family to come and join him. Not knowing all, they consented; but, just as they were about to start, some one gave the alarm—some ‘meddlesome old woman’ he writes disgustedly—and they refused to come. A month afterwards when the news reached him, he felt he could delay no longer. He and two other caste men from his own country, who also wanted to be Christians, clubbed together, went to church together, studied the Bible together, and finally decided to be baptized together. His heart went to them in clinging affection.

But spies were on the track. They had thought themselves unnoticed in the great city; but the caste confederation has eyes everywhere, they had been under observation all the time. It was reported that they consorted with Christians, ceased wearing Vishnu’s marks, and were cooking for themselves, because their Hindu cook considered them reprobate. This brought two fathers in hot haste to Madras. Both sons yielded. The third had no father to come; the month’s journey was too much for the frail old mother, so he was left unmolested, and he went quietly on.

There were crowds in the great city, but none of his own. It was an empty city to him. Most of us have known such times, when the sudden ceasing of some voice makes a silence that 'aches round' us 'like a strong disease, and new.' His was the poet nature, sensitive to suffering as to happiness. Behind him lay his home and all good memories; before him the heaped-up pain of hurting further those whom he most dearly loved; and around him, closing heavily, the silence.

It was the most difficult time in his life. He was helped through it by a young missionary to whom he was teaching Tamil. 'She talked to me most feelingly about the Saviour, and steadied me in Christ. The work I did for her was little; the work she did for me was much.'

He saw his two friends occasionally, but most of his time was spent alone, and as he had no one to talk to he talked the more to his Lord. Conversations alone with Christ are wonderfully strengthening. Soon he felt himself urged with an inward urging to burn the bridge behind. He was baptized.

From this time onwards he was in truth a man in love with our Lord Jesus Christ. It pleased the Lord so to 'line his heart with the love of his Lord Jesus,' that in the years when we knew him he could not speak of Him without a kindling of expression and a fervour

that recalled Samuel Rutherford, Ter Steegen, and Tauler. The same spirit burned in him, the warm love that is not afraid of being too warm. The Love that would not let him go, but followed and found and won him, and won him now to an abandonment of love that broke out in rivers of love songs. Oh, for more and more of that love!

And now one idea informed his life—the passion of the soul-winner was like a fire within him. He must return to his own house, and win his wife and mother. He left Madras, travelled southwards, eager, expectant, longing to see his dear ones again, and to tell them all. They received him with tears, with coldness, with bitter reproaches, and the turning away of the faces he loved.

‘O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.’

‘My mother’s agony was boundless. It would be impossible to describe it. I know not the words.’ Things soften as we look back at them through the midst of many years. This thing, this pain, stands out unblurred in the sharpness of its outline, a cruel thing and a bitter. The days that followed were like so

many jagged-edged saws, sawing away relentlessly at the very nerves of his being. It is easy to be brave when our hearts are whole and well, but when they are cut and hurt, and strained all out of shape, then it is hard. 'Strive to throng through the thorns of this life to be with Christ.' By God's grace he thronged through, but for eighteen months it was a daily thronging through. His wife left him. He had two young children to see to. None of his womanfolk would help him. His old friends despised him. His people would have none of him.

After a while his mother relented, and helped him a little with the children. And the brother did what he could. But until his own wife came back to him he was desolate on the human side, though comforted as such must be: for 'only heaven is better than to walk with Christ at midnight over moonless seas.'

He had kept the two little children in the hope that they would draw their mother back. She, widowed, according to Hindu feeling, held aloof in loneliness only second to his. But it was as he had hoped. She returned to the town, though not at first to her home. The children were sent to see her. After long waiting she was willing to return to her polluted home, for the sake of the mother-love that

could not rest away. And he taught her patiently till at last she too found Christ.

After a time his old mother gave in, and several other members of his family were converted. He was greatly used in winning intelligent Hindus, men not easily satisfied. He became known as the 'Catcher of Men.' No one since his time has exerted quite such an influence among young students and thinkers and caste-bound orthodox Hindus. It was not only his scholarship which all acknowledged and respected, it was his character. The Hindus studied him through the years of his outwardly uneventful life, and they recognized the man for what he was. So old age came quietly on, and then, as we have told it :

'To the light more clear than noon,
Passed a soul that grew to music
Till it was with God in tune.'

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A Tamil manuscript has been sent to us by a lawyer, one of our leading Christians. He tells his story, as our poet told his, to the glory of God's grace. He went to study, he says, in the Christian school where the poet was Professor of Tamil. He had come from his Hindu home, and was full of prejudice against Christians. His mother had feared to let him go among Christians lest they would inject mind-deluding

medicine into a plantain and persuade him to eat it, or otherwise tamper with him and beguile him. So, fortified by warnings, and inclined himself to be on guard, he approached Christianity cautiously. He studied him with a boy's keen eyes: 'I never heard him tell a lie, never saw him confuse truth; in his God there must be a holy power,' was his conclusion. That boy became a man noted for integrity of life. It will not be known till eternity shows up the secrets of time, how much our Church owes to this one life, influenced at its source by that dear friend, who, while he influenced, never knew that he was doing anything.

One of the first Tamil scholars I knew was a keen teacher, whose lessons were valued by all of us. He taught me in his holiday time, and when I asked about the fee (for the hours were worth rupees to him), he would not hear of pay. 'No,' he said, and stuck to it, 'it is the way by which I can help you to get quickly to my people.' This man was won by the poet, led by him, as he told us, 'to the Lotus feet of the Lover of souls.'

Two out of many—God keeps the count—are enough to prove the poet did not live in vain. The Gospel which made him what he was, has not come here in vain. Nor have we come in vain if we may have fellowship,

with our Lord in His joy, when He sees of the travail of His soul even here, in a sorrowful land, where so often He has grief.

Part of the most enduring work our poet did was literary. He has left books which we can give to the most critical Hindu, knowing that so far as the choice of language is concerned it will not repel him, but appeal to the finer part in him, and put the message before him intelligently and winningly. Not long ago a Christian schoolmaster was travelling by train in the same compartment as a Brahman. He asked the Brahman if he had ever heard of Christianity. For answer the Brahman retired to the farther end of the carriage. The Christian waited, then asked, 'Do you care for poetry?' If there is one word which charms and draws a cultured Hindu it is the word poetry. The Brahman's eyes glistened. The Christian began to chant stanzas from our poet's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The poem follows Indian rules of art; to the trained ear the fall of its cadence is quite perfect. The Brahman listened, won to listen at first by the beauty of the poem. Sin, redemption, Christ's life and death, clear teaching about the way of salvation, outpourings of love and devotion—still the Brahman listened. At last, after long chanting, broken by words of explanation here and there, the Christian stopped. 'That is

Christianity,' he said. The Brahman was disarmed. For the first time he had listened to 'the wooing note.'

But looking back, as we do now, to the memory of our poet, we think of him most as our friend. The scholar lives by the work he did ; the friend lives on in our hearts. The wise talk of East and West, and how neither can ever meet or merge, because there will always be something between. In Christ there is no East and West ; His love fuses the two into one. That old man was one of us ; we were as one of his own to him. And when we meet in our real Home, where East and West are unspoken words, and all earth's divisions forgotten, he will welcome us as a father would welcome the children remembered name by name, parted from him for a little while.

THIS short biography of H. A. Krishna Pillai is the first of a series of little books meant primarily for use in religious education classes. The needs of High School pupils are kept in view. Other biographies to follow are :

KALI CHARAN BANERJEE

LAL BEHARI DAY

NEHEMIAH GOREH

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH

BISHOP AZARIAH

W. T. SATTIANADHAN

K. C. CHATTERJEE

K. M. BANERJEE

JACOB RAVI VARMA

VEDANAYAGA SASTRIAR

PANDITA RAMABAI

N. V. TILAK

IMAD-UD-DIN